***Amendments to the Claims***

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listing, of claims in the application.

1-14. (Canceled)

15. (Currently amended) A filter element for a chromatographic column (1), comprising a support cage (3) whose contour defines a cylinder open on one side, and a filter (10) which abuts the inside of the support cage (3) and defines a hollow space which is open on one side, wherein the support cage (3) has at its open end a substantially annular collar (4), and wherein the filter (~~2~~ 10) is fixedly joined to the inside of the support cage (3) and wherein at least part of the outer surface of the support cage (3), in particular a sleeve-like portion (6) of the support cage (3), abuts the inside wall of the column element (2) in a frictionally engaged manner, while the remaining part of the outer surface is at a distance from the inside wall of the column element (2).

16. (Currently amended) A filter element according to claim 1, wherein the support cage (3) ~~preferably~~ has, in the region adjacent to the collar (4), a sleeve-like portion (6) having a closed outer surface, the outside diameter of which extends over the outer contour of the support cage (3).

17. (Previously presented) A filter element according to claim 1, wherein the support cage (3) has been manufactured from a plastics material.

18. (Currently amended) A filter element according to ~~any one of the preceding claims~~ claim 1, wherein the outer contour of the support cage is formed by longitudinal struts (7) as well as at least one annular strut (8).

19. (Previously presented) A filter element according to claim 1, wherein the end edges of the support cage (3) are defined by at least one transverse strut (9).

20. (Previously presented) A filter element according to claim 1, wherein the filter (10) has been manufactured from a paper material.

21. (Previously presented) A filter element according to claim 20, wherein the paper material lines the inner contour of the support cage (3) in a single layer.

22. (Withdrawn) A chromatographic separating column, wherein it has a syringe-shaped column element (2) which is open at one end and is provided at the other end with a tapered outlet (11) and into which a filter element (3, 10) according to any one of the preceding claims has been inserted.

23. (Withdrawn) A chromatographic separating column according to claim 22, wherein the size of the support cage (3) is such that at least part of its outer surface abuts the inside of the column element (2).

24. (Withdrawn) A chromatographic separating column according to claim 23, wherein at least part of the outer surface of the support cage (3), in particular the sleeve-like portion (6), abuts the inside wall of the column element (2) in a frictionally engaged manner, while the remaining part of the outer surface is at a distance from the inside wall of the column element (2).

25. (Withdrawn) A chromatographic separating column according claim 22, wherein the collar (4) of the support cage (3) rests on the open end (5) of the column element (2), the length of the filter element being such that a gap (13) is formed between the closed end face of the support cage (3) and the outlet of the column element (2).

26. (Withdrawn) A chromatographic separating column according to claim 25, wherein chromatography material (12) is provided in the gap (13).

27. (Withdrawn) A chromatographic separating column according to claim 22, wherein the support cage (3), in the region of its open end, is joined directly or indirectly to the column

element (2) in an air-tight manner by means of a separate sealing element (15) or a sealing element (15) joined to the support cage (3).

28. (Withdrawn) A chromatographic separating device according to claim 22, wherein it has a separating column (2) as well as a device for applying a partial vacuum (14) to the outlet (11) of the separating column.